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Chapter Activities

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AAUP Chapter, Illinois Wesleyan University

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Illinois Wesleyan Chapter of the AAUP

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NEWSLETTER

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Narendra Jaggi

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<http://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/iwuaaup/>

On Electing Chairs

by Narendra Jaggi

Here are some of my thoughts, neither original nor radical, on policies regarding the appointment of department chairs and similar mid-level academic administration positions at Illinois Wesleyan University.

I begin by noting that these views reflect my own perspective, as someone who served as a department chair for two decades in a row, and then gave up that responsibility approximately 1 1/2 years ago. In my judgment, it is, by and large, unhealthy (for all parties) to have the same person serve for more than a couple of three-year terms in a row as department chair. Additionally, it is best if the chair is selected, using a transparent procedure, by faculty members in that department.

Except for particularly small departments, where certain considerations of sensitivity might be at play, simple election might suffice as an optimum procedure. This is already the practice in many departments at Illinois Wesleyan. Perhaps, it would be good for the faculty as a whole to officially adopt this as a policy for all departments. Except for rare cases of extraordinary expertise, my comments might also apply to other mid-level academic administrative positions like the director of a school, program or division.

This proposal is fully consistent with the recommendations of AAUP, and it might also be quite uncontroversial if it is presented to the faculty for a vote.

Rationale:

- Academic departments are the functional organizational levels where most of the fundamental work of the University -- teaching, learning, scholarship, and artistic creation -- is organized and conducted.
- In addition, departments are also often (rare exceptions notwithstanding), the seats of deep commitments to, expertise in, and wisdom concerning how to do the work of University. For these reasons, departmental autonomy has long been seen as worth nurturing.
- Such autonomy suggests, almost demands, that the faculty in the department select their own department chair, with little influence from outside.
- In order to serve effectively, the chair needs the confidence of the faculty members in the department. It seems to me that electing the chair might be the single best mechanism for ensuring that the chair enjoys such confidence.
- For most of the departments, therefore, a simple and straightforward election might suffice as the optimum procedure. For some of the smaller departments, one may want to tweak the procedure a little bit in order to accommodate certain considerations of sensitivity that might be at play.

Joining the
AAUP:
<http://www.aaup.org>

Here are some potential undesirable consequences of open-ended terms and appointments by administrators outside the department.

- They can allow, even embolden, irresponsible chairs to distribute the work of the department unfairly, sometimes with disastrous consequences, both for faculty and students.
- They can create an exaggerated sense of the value of the purely administrative work that a chair must do.
- Even under the best of circumstances, and with the best of intentions, the department loses the benefits of diverse ways of leading, representing, and advocating for the department, ways that are readily available in the department as a whole.
- They can have a strong negative impact upon the scholarly and artistic productivity of the chair.

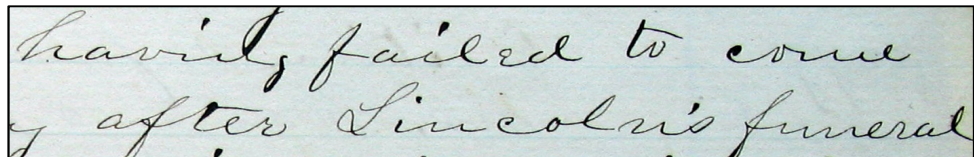
It is my judgment, and also my experience, that counterarguments, in particular those that appeal to the value of continuity, are often self-serving, and do not withstand close scrutiny.

It seems to me that, without having to dig up the historical circumstances, and with civility, we might be able to make this change in our governance practices. I, myself, would consider it to be a step towards improving shared governance on our campus.

Digital Preservation as a Faculty Governance Concern

By Meg Miner, University Archivist

Our record of faculty actions dates from 1864. My favorite story from those early minutes is the entry for May 8, 1865. Faculty dismissed classes for President Abraham Lincoln's funeral, and the day after the Faculty Secretary records a punishment for several students who tarried too long:



"Some students having failed to come to time [sic] on the Friday after Lincoln's funeral ... were admitted to recitations with demerits uncanceled and the following punishments adjudged"

As IWU's archivist I have the privilege of making these kinds of materials known and available to any interested person. I also have the responsibility of making sure that the records we create today are available to future generations. This is where you all come in.

You may know that the IWU AAUP chapter was founded in 1935, but did you know that our founding immediately followed an incident involving the firing of a faculty member which was investigated by the AAUP? I certainly did not know that story, but Joerg Tiede made me aware of it when he transferred the Chapter's records into the archives' care (see http://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/iwuaaup_act/7).

With paper-based documents, survival through the ages is likely under most circumstances. That first faculty minutes' book is a little fragile but still quite legible! In the digital age, we cannot wait for decades before transferring

documents with historical value into managed, preservation environments.

The transfer of our Chapter's records led to a dialogue about how the group's activities could be preserved over the long term, and it seemed like the perfect opportunity to discuss the possibilities of using the Faculty and Staff Governance section of Digital Commons (DC) as a place to store these records. Previously the Chapter had a page on IWU's server, but without the infrastructure offered by systems like DC, electronic records may be lost over time.

It seems counterintuitive, but current estimates are that without digital preservation, unmonitored electronic records could become inaccessible within a few years, a decade at most. Documents added to structured systems are more easily transferred into preservation systems so that our records can be monitored for loss of fidelity and converted to new formats when software changes over time. In the interim, platforms like DC offer the benefit of stable URLs and search interfaces.

To ensure long-term viability of our work we need to begin a digital preservation program now as a core component of campus activities like teaching or research. You can help by alerting me to the governance work you are doing outside of the major elective committees. If I hadn't been a member of AAUP, I might not have known of the Chapter's activities and become familiar with the needs of its documentary history.

Not every word written or record created is suitable for permanent storage in a publicly searchable, accessible environment. There are nuances to these decisions that I would be happy to discuss, but one thing is certain: the less widely reported a group's activities are, the more likely they will be lost.

You will want to consider ways of preserving your personal digital legacy, too. Think about what's important to you in terms of your immediate work and what's important long-term. Are they on a single hard drive or have they become inaccessible in obsolete software that's on a disk pushed to the back of a drawer? If they are important, you have to act sooner rather than later.

How about the students you advise? The record of their activities may only exist on social media and is not likely to last beyond the time of whoever established an account with a particular site.

Everyone at the university has a role to play in securing our digital legacy. Campus administrators at all levels need to understand the value you place on digital preservation and allocate resources accordingly. Digital preservation activities are part of our core mission; they secure the intellectual capital represented in our teaching and research products; they identify the kinds of activities that become evidence our vibrant, varied expressions as a community.

If you want to be part of this effort or have concerns for your personal digital legacy, contact me at mminer@iwu.edu or x1538.

Book discussion announcement

Our selection is *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (2010) by Martha Nussbaum. Dr. Nussbaum is a Professor of Law and Ethics at the University of Chicago and will be visiting IWU on February 21, 2014 for the opening of the Center for Human Rights.

NEW THIS YEAR: This volume is available for Kindle users in a way the Mellon Center can reimburse. Please register with Julie Lappin (jlappin@iwu.edu) so that we can compile a reading group list but also let her know you will be ordering a Kindle copy. Reimbursement can be requested by sending Julie the receipt and a

Request for Non-Invoice Payment form no later than Dec 12, 2013.

If a print copy is preferred, let Julie know by December 3, 2013 so that the books will arrive on campus before the semester break.

We are planning two discussions related to *Not for Profit*. Stand by for details but SAVE THESE DATES: 4PM on February 12 and noon on February 14.

This reading group is open to all faculty so get a friend to sign up and join us—we'll take on these timely issues together!

Spring dates to remember

March 1, 2014: Nominations for the *James D. Dougan Award for Contributions to Faculty Governance*

The AAUP chapter of Illinois Wesleyan created the Dougan Award in 2011 in honor of the late Professor of Psychology, James Dougan. The award seeks to recognize meritorious service in the cause of faculty governance in line with Professor Dougan's staunch commitment to defending the faculty's right to participate in shaping the direction of the university. For details on the award criteria, see http://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/iwuaaup_act/9/

Previous award recipients are

2013: Alison Sainsbury, Associate Professor of English

2012: Larry Stout, Professor of Mathematics

2011: Mike Young, Professor of History

Their award citations are available at http://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/iwuaaup_win/

April 23, 2014: Chapter Delegate selection for the annual *AAUP Conference on the State of Higher Education*

Each year one of our members attends the national meeting. If you are interested in being the 2014 delegate, submit your name to Meg Miner at mminer@iwu.edu. If more than one candidate steps forward, the chapter will elect the delegate by secret ballot. The meeting will take place June 11-15, 2014 in Washington, DC.